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## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 628

Offered January 10, 2001

Prefiled January 10, 2001

*Establishing a joint subcommittee to examine the problem of litter, trash, and graffiti along public highways.*

Patrons—Crittenden, Barlow, Baskerville, Christian, Darner, Day, Diamonstein, Jones, D.C., Jones, J.C., McEachin, Spruill and Watts; Senator: Maxwell

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, while the Department of Environmental Quality is responsible for administration of the comprehensive litter control and recycling program in the Commonwealth, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is responsible for the control of litter along state-maintained highways, and localities are responsible for control of litter along locally-maintained streets and highways; and

WHEREAS, under the Adopt-a-Highway program administered by VDOT, more than 8,000 individuals, groups, and organizations have adopted more than 14,000 miles, approximately 26 percent, of state-maintained roads; and,

WHEREAS, last year alone, program volunteers collected more than 300,000 bags (over 68,000 cubic yards) of trash, and, while some portions of state roads are not eligible for the program due to safety, access, or other concerns, portions of state roads in over 20 counties are currently on the list of those in need of adoption and the list continues to grow; and

WHEREAS, according to estimates provided by VDOT, litter collected along state-maintained roads not included in the Adopt-a-Highway program amounts to over 1.2 million bags (275,000) cubic yards of garbage; and

WHEREAS, the cost to clean-up rights-of-way, and drainage ditches and maintain litter patrols for such roads amounts to approximately \$9 million a year, and reliable estimates of the cost to localities for similar litter control efforts are not currently available; and

WHEREAS, litter and garbage along state and local highways and streets presents not only a visual problem, but also a safety and health problem as it can lead to clogged drainage ditches which flood highways and streets during times of even moderate precipitation; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly recognized the problems associated with the proliferation of litter by enacting legislation that provides that anyone who illegally litters on public property, including public highways, rights of way and adjacent areas, is subject to up to a jail term of up to one year, or a fine of between \$250 and \$2,500, or both; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth has developed a litter control program which provides grants to localities for litter prevention and recycling activities, and grants for regional and statewide litter and recycling educational initiatives; and

WHEREAS, in fiscal year 2000, the litter control program awarded nearly \$1.4 million in grants to localities and over \$360,000 for state and regional educational programs, and local grants, which were met by nearly \$4 million in matching funds, and \$3.6 million, which was contributed for in-kind services, resulted in a total of almost \$8 million expended for litter control and recycling activities; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Conference of Mayors and Keep America Beautiful, Inc. have identified litter, illegal dumping, and graffiti as a serious and costly problem for American cities and have formed an alliance called the Urban Litter Partnership to assist cities in analyzing the impact of litter, illegal dumping, and graffiti in cities, and to establish a forum in which to share information, provide research, document successful programs, and promote effective partnership solutions; and

WHEREAS, in 1999, the partnership held a national summit entitled Building Clean, Livable Cities, and released a report highlighting proven, successful strategies (i.e., best practices) to combat litter, illegal dumping, graffiti, and other forms of defacement; and

WHEREAS, despite the substantial amount of public moneys provided in grants and expended by VDOT and the myriad of state, local, and volunteer efforts to combat litter, the proliferation of litter along Virginia's streets and highways continues to grow; and

WHEREAS, since both state and local budgets are expected to be tight this year, and funds for transportation in particular are expected to be limited, there is an urgent need for consideration of more effective, coordinated strategies for controlling litter and reducing costs to the public; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study the problem of litter, trash and graffiti along public highways in the

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58 Commonwealth. The study shall develop recommendations on the adoption of more effective strategies  
59 to control such litter, trash and graffiti that reduce costs to the public. The joint subcommittee shall  
60 consist of seven members, which shall include six legislative members as follows: four members of the  
61 House of Delegates, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House, in accordance with the principles of  
62 proportional representation contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates; two members of the  
63 Senate, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; and the Commissioner of  
64 the Virginia Department of Transportation or his designee to serve as a nonvoting ex officio member.

65 In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall examine current litter control efforts and  
66 expenditures, cooperation and coordination between all agencies responsible for litter control in the  
67 Commonwealth, estimates of future needs, both in programmatic effort and in funding, studies and  
68 initiatives of other states aimed at controlling litter in a cost-effective manner, and the strategies  
69 highlighted by the Urban Litter Partnership.

70 The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$6,000.

71 The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. Technical assistance  
72 shall be provided by the Virginia Department of Transportation. All agencies of the Commonwealth  
73 shall provide assistance to the joint subcommittee, upon request.

74 The joint subcommittee shall complete its work in time to submit its written findings and  
75 recommendations to the Governor and the 2002 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the  
76 procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative  
77 documents.

78 Implementation of this resolution is subject to subsequent approval and certification by the Joint  
79 Rules Committee. The Committee may withhold expenditures or delay the period for the conduct of the  
80 study.